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ABSTRACT

This paper describes the Survey of Effective School Practices, which began in 1995-96 to examine key characteristics, common elements, and unique qualities that contributed to having several elementary schools and one middle school in a large Texas school district become state recognized or exemplary. The study involved a survey instrument that measured effective school practices of recognized schools. The survey focused on instructional environment, instructional processes, administration processes, and communication processes. Results indicate seven themes that capture the dynamics of the schools' excellence: high quality teaching, setting high expectations, monitoring standards, rewarding results, using resources that facilitate the teaching process, creating a cooperative work environment, and having effective, frequent communication. What appears to set these schools apart are the commitment, creativity, persistence, and professionalism with which they have gone about the task of instructional implementation. One of the fundamental elements of this success is the collaborative culture that is dedicated to continuous improvement. The survey is appended. (SM)

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EFFECTIVE SCHOOL PRACTICES: WHAT WORKS

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Brownsville Independent School District
Paper Presented at the International Conference on Effective Schools
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INTRODUCTION

A fundamental element of an effective and successful school organization is a collaborative culture that is dedicated to a commitment to continuous improvement The **Survey of Effective School Practices** in this study, which was initiated in 1995-96, describes some of the key characteristics, common elements, and unique qualities that contributed to having several elementary school campuses and one middle school in one of the largest school districts on the Border, which is located on the southernmost tip of Texas, become State Recognized or Exemplary. The most effective schools in this study were identified by their commitment, creativity, persistence and professionalism as they went about implementing instruction, programs, and different strategies aimed at students' success. There are no quick fixes to achieving academic excellence. To achieve student academic success, the school district, in collaboration with campus principals has gone about the task of setting yearly goals based on the Academic Excellence Indicator System, which is the State of Texas Accountability System. These local goals are more stringent than the state goals as an attempt to safeguard that none of the district campuses are identified by the state as "low-performing."

METHODS AND PROCEDURES

This section includes a description of the methodology used to determine the effective school practices that contributed to the success of those campuses to become recognized. This will be accomplished by a discussion of the development of the instrument used to make this determination. The selection of the population and the method of collection of the data are outlined, followed by the presentation of the method for treatment of data.

DEVELOPMENT OF THE MEASURING INSTRUMENT

The accomplishments of the purpose set forth in this investigation required the development of a survey instrument to measure the effective school practices of Recognized Schools so that the level of effectiveness could be documented and shared with the rest of the schools in the Brownsville Independent School District. In the development of the survey instrument each section was carefully created with an emphasis on student achievement and that all statements be correlated with Effective Schools Research. The survey was developed to measure instructional, programmatic, organizational, and administrative practices at the selected recognized campuses. The Survey of Effective School Practices is therefore a composite of four factors, each of which is discussed below.

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Instructional Environment

Instructional Environment is the first factor in the survey and is concerned with how staff perceives conditions or attitudes at school that directly affect student achievement This section has eleven statements that ask teachers to rate each statement to determine how the first factor contributed to their school's success in student achievement. The rating was set from weakly contributed (rating of 1) to strongly contributed (rating of 5). A summary question is provided at the end of this section that solicits an opinion on the major strengths of the campus' Instructional Environment that led to higher student achievement.

Instructional Process

Instructional Process is the second factor and is concerned with activities and planning by teachers that directly lead to higher student achievement. Twenty-nine statements were developed for this section of the survey to determine what factors teachers believe contributed to students' higher achievement. A summary question is asked to determine what instructional processes teachers' believe also contributed to student achievement.

Administration Process

Administration Process identifies staff perceptions of administrative procedures and policies that indirectly or directly lead to higher student achievement. This section of the survey has fifteen statements that require campus staff to assess the administrative conditions at the campus that contribute to student achievement. The summary question solicits input on the major strengths of the school's administration that led to higher student achievement.

Communication Process

Communication Process is focused on how the staff, students, and parents interact and how these factors indirectly lead to higher student achievement. Nine statements and a summary question make up the fourth section of the survey of effective school practices. The summary question solicits the same opinion as the other three factors in the survey.

SELECTION OF THE POPULATION

This study investigated the effective schools practices of selected campuses in the Brownsville I.S.D. A total number of seven campuses in the district that had been recognized by the Texas Education Agency for high student achievement during the 1996-97 school year as measured by the Texas Assessment of Academic Skills test were identified. Seven campuses met the stated criteria. These were: Burns Elementary School, Castaneda Elementary School, Cromack Elementary School, Momingside Elementary School, Resaca Elementary School, Sharp

Elementary School, and Russell Elementary School. Oliveira Middle School was selected since at that time it was the only secondary campus that came close to becoming Recognized.

COLLECTION OF DATA

After the identification of the recognized campuses was completed a data collection form was employed by the researcher to extract the information necessary for the completion of this study. Data concerning Recognized status of the campuses were extracted from the following sources: Academic Excellence Indicator System (AEIS), Texas Assessment of Academic Skills (TAAS) and the State Accountability Plan.

The data collected for this study were from the total population of the campuses that were identified as Recognized by the Texas Education Agency including the secondary school that came close to being Recognized. The data were recorded on scan sheets to facilitate the tabulating of factors for each campus and tables were constructed to display the results of the survey. The data did not lend itself to any statistical treatment

FINDINGS

Results of the 1995-96 Survey

The Survey of Effective School Practices describes some of the key characteristics, common elements, and unique qualities that have made seven Brownsville elementary schools become state recognized. One middle school was also reviewed in this study. Although not recognized, this school was selected because it has exhibited characteristics that have brought about consistent gains to all student populations. It is hoped that the enthusiasm and commitment to quality education from these schools will suggest effective practices that other schools might follow. This summary highlights some of the major findings from an ongoing research project. After a review of the data provided by the Recognized schools, the following seven themes were identified that captured the dynamics of their excellence:

- High Quality Teaching
- Setting High Expectations
- Monitoring Standards

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- Rewarding Results
- Resources that Facilitate the Teaching Process
- Creating a Cooperative Work Environment
- Effective and Frequent Communication

All eight schools cited Title I programs (100%/) for strongly influencing last year's academic success. The next most frequently mentioned program area that contributed to higher student achievement was Computer Assisted Instruction (87%). Seventy-five percent of the administrators reported Bilingual, Special Education and Gifted and Talented as the program areas where their schools excelled. Almost half of the schools mentioned Counseling (50%) and At-risk programs (62%) as being major contributors to student achievement. Significantly fewer administrators reported Career and Technology (37%), and After School Tutoring (25%) as significant program areas.

High Quality Teaching

The first common theme of these schools was high quality teaching. A wide range of instructional processes was combined in these schools. Many administrators agreed that last year's success was strongly related to the use of one or more of these instructional processes backed by intensive staff development:

- team teaching (50%)
- peer tutors (62%)
- multi-culturalism (50%)
- cooperative learning strategies (63%)
- multi sensory teaching techniques (75%)
- thematic units (62%)

Likewise, a major factor in their success was good teaching practices:

- teachers providing wait time for students to respond to questions during instructions (100%)
- teachers implementing multiple independent activities after guided practice (88%) small and large group instruction (100%)
- use of higher level questioning strategies (88%)
- teachers relating content to student interest and experience (75%)
- teachers were willing to spend extra time with students (100%)
- teachers interact with students verbally and/or non-verbally during instruction (88%)
- utilized speakers, presenters, mentors, tutors and community volunteers to enhance classroom instruction (50%)

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- kept students regularly informed on their classroom progress (100%)
- clearly explained content and learning tasks (100%)

Other factors which contributed to quality teaching addressed in essay questions included planning instruction for maximum effect, communicating what is expected of students, reinforcing the belief that students are capable of learning, presenting stimulating lessons through several instruction processes that fostered individualized instruction and the ability to apply classroom rules consistently. Examples of programs that exemplify quality instructional processes include:

- Odyssey of the mind that promotes divergent thinking and develops creative problem solving in students' K-12 grade (i.e., Cromack).
- Multi-sensory and multi-cultural strategies that enable students to see a connection to the real world and allows them to be taught in their preferred learning style (i.e., Cromack, Morningside).
- Gifted and Talented strategies were implemented in the regular classroom to enhance higher order thinking skills (i.e., Castaneda).
- Curriculum that were enriched through campus developed sequential thematic units that enhance students' interest and experiences (i.e., (Castaneda)
- Team teaching in grades 2nd -5th in the areas of Reading, English, Math, Science and Social Studies. Students were exposed to different teaching styles and techniques (i.e., Cromack).
- Multiple Intelligence strategies to deliver instruction based on students' learning style or cognitive preference (i.e., Cromack).
- Thematic units, multi-sensory techniques, and multi-cultural curriculum allow students to see a connection in their learning. By incorporating advanced teaching models such as deductive and inductive reasoning, concept formation, concept attainment, group investigation, and advanced organizers, students are able to draw conclusions, problem solve and generalize independently of teacher (i.e., Oliveira).
- Rotation of classes that contributed to a well-rounded curriculum (i.e., Russell).

Setting High Expectations

A second theme involves setting high expectations (i.e., Bums, Castaneda). Eighty-seven percent of the administrators were in agreement that setting high, clearly defined expectations for their students strongly contributed to their academic success. Teachers in these schools balanced the drive for higher expectations with the need to motivate individual students. Teachers consistently maintained high standards for all students in their classes while varying the delivery of instruction for individual students. The campus staff helped students to adjust to academic demands through extra effort and special programs that enrich instruction. Many administrators consistently reported that teachers reinforced the belief that all students are capable of learning by:

- providing equitable opportunity for response among high and low achievers (88%)
- providing individual help during independent practice among high and low achievers (88%) making themselves available for before/after school tutoring (38%)
- having a personal interest in students (88 %)
- being polite as they interact with students (100%)
- maintaining high standards for their classrooms (100%)
- providing assistance for all students to meet the expectations (100%)

Rewarding Results

The ability to recognize both student and teacher successes was another common theme of these successful schools. Seventy-five percent of the administrators reported that they used every opportunity to recognize students and staff in order to build pride and commitment to the school. The majority of administrators reported that a strong factor in their success was teachers:

- providing praise for the learning performance (100%)
- providing a reason for praise (88 %)
- providing a high level of feedback to students (100%)

Examples of positive reinforcement programs included:

- RECESS, rewarding extraordinary classroom efforts = student success (i.e., Morningside)
- Sunny Le Bear (i.e., Morningside).
- a student award program implemented for students mastering Texas Assessment of Academic Skills (TAAS) objectives (i.e., Sharp), or for students who behaved appropriately (i.e., Oliveira, Morningside).
- weekly counseling sessions on self-esteem and self-confidence (i.e., Castaneda).

Monitoring Standards

Another common theme was that schools regularly monitored the implementation of programs (i.e., Burns, Oliveira). The most frequently mentioned monitoring procedures were: homework monitoring, regular staff meetings to share student progress, continuous monitoring of Campus Action Student Achievement Improvement Plan (CASAIP) goals, objectives and activities (i.e., Burns), implementation of pre- and post-testing with criterion referenced tests at the end of every sixweeks (i.e., Castaneda), and the development and implementation of TAAS time lines to align the curriculum to the TAAS objectives (i.e., Oliveira). In each of these campuses, the principal is seen as a strong leader that monitors the school's direction by:

- reviewing staffing patterns to improve instruction (63%)
- reviewing instructional strategies to ensure that new techniques learned during staff
- development is being implemented (75%)
- reviewing the CASAIP during staff meetings and in the classroom (88%)

Resources that Facilitate the Teaching & Learning Process

Staff members in all these recognized schools facilitate the process of Teaming and teaching by maximizing available resources. The first resource was time. Staff in these schools utilized effective time management strategies to increase their opportunities for interdisciplinary planning and teaching. Administrators most frequently mentioned that planning is done weekly and teachers follow a master schedule that increased time for planning, helped students to be more on task, and increased time for planning between and within grades (i.e., Resaca). Interruptions are rare during instructional time. Furthermore, teachers planned instruction for maximum effect. For example, all eight administrators reported that students:

- received at least 250 minutes of reading and math instruction per week (100%)
- reading instruction was incorporated into all content areas (100%)
- teachers used small and large group instruction (100%)
- teachers used innovative instructional strategies that reflected knowledge of teaching and learning theory (100%)

Examples of school time management policies and procedures that enhanced student learning included:

- Administration allowed time for academic teaming which maximized the students Teaming. Teachers were able to meet weekly with instructional facilitators to discuss academics, strengths and weaknesses across grade levels, and were kept abreast of current educational trends (i.e., Castaneda).

- Teachers, administrators, and support staff monitored the implementation of instructional programs closely, reporting any problem, and meeting regularly to share student progress (i.e., Resaca).

The second resource was personnel. Some schools cite a smaller student to teacher ratio as an important factor in their success (i.e., Morningside, Resaca, and Sharp). Sometimes this was accomplished by utilizing paraprofessionals funded through Title I monies. Likewise, classes with greater enrollments were assigned full-time assistants. Eighty-seven percent of the administrators agreed that small class size contributed to effective instruction. In addition,

administrators made maximum use of teachers' knowledge by having them conduct in-service programs and by providing ample staff development opportunities. Eighty-seven percent of administrators reported that their ability to provide relevant and continuous staff development to improve instruction was a major factor in higher student achievement (i.e., Resaca, Burns). Some teachers were provided with staff development on test taking strategies in order to prepare students to be better test takers (i.e., Oliveira). Examples of test taking strategies include:

- Project Pathways
- Sharon Wells Problem Solving Plan
- Composition Map

The third resource was the use of successful instructional models. Math and reading computer labs allowed students to work daily on TAAS objectives and other skills (i.e., Castaneda, Cromack). Software was upgraded in established labs and new software was introduced that focused on individual student academic needs (i.e., Cromack). Specific instructional programs that were cited as influential factors included:

- Michael Eaton Reading Program (i.e., Burns, Resaca)
- Math Their Way/ Sharon Wells - mathematical strategies to solve problems from
- concrete to the abstract level (i.e., Burns)
- Michael Eaton Writing Program - comprehensive program from K-5 that allows for progression of writing skills and vocabulary acquisitions (i.e., Burns)
- Accelerated Reader (i.e., Resaca)
- Journal Writing - encourages students to write as a means of self expression (i.e., Burns)
- Cross-Age/Peer Tutoring (i.e., Oliveira, Burns, Morningside, Resaca, Cromack)
- H. 0. S. T. program (i. e., Castaneda)
- Basic Skills Assistant Program (i.e., Castaneda)
- Math manipulatives (i.e., Resaca)
- Learning Styles (i.e., Resaca)
- Winter Heaven volunteers to read to students (i.e., Resaca)
- Tutorial/enrichment program targets students unable to master TAAS objectives
- (i.e., Sharp, Oliveira)
- Customized ESL Program and Special Education program that places students in the least restricted/segregated environment (i.e., Oliveira)

Creating a Cooperative Work Environment

Another reoccurring theme was the importance of creating a cooperative work environment (i.e., Oliveira, Morningside, Sharp, Resaca, and Oliveira). In general, the formula that most of these schools used to provide a cooperative work environment was to foster participation in decision-

making, have a set of policies and procedures that reinforces the school's vision, provide autonomy to carry out work, have a sense of shared purpose and community, and provide adequate intrinsic and extrinsic rewards. In all of these schools the principal set and maintained the direction with a clear and distinct stated vision (88%). Strategies most frequently mentioned for creating a cooperative work environment included:

- empowering their teachers to be risk takers (88%)
- making informal contracts with students and teacher (88%)
- providing for opportunities for staff to be creative in how they carry out administrative activities (88%)
- allowing teachers and students to participate in decisions that affect their work (63%)
- allowing teachers to play a major role in the determining of the curriculum regarding subject area objectives and classes to be taught (88%)
- creating an environment that made school a safe place to learn (75%)
- students have a clear understanding of the discipline management system (75%)

Effective and Frequent Communication

The last common theme that appeared was clear and frequent communication among all staff members, parents and students. A majority of administrators (88%) reported that having an open and understandable dialogue with their staff members or teachers networking to exchange ideas made their efforts successful. Administrators at the schools reported frequent:

- teacher-student conversations regarding how student is progressing in school and on tests(100%)
- teacher-student conversations regarding what students are expected to learn (100%)
- teacher-teacher conversations to develop a common focus and strategies to accomplish goals and objectives (100%)
- efforts to increase the quality and quantity of parent/teacher communication (100%)

Some examples of effective communication practices included:

- principals held monthly grade level meetings to discuss student achievement and strategies that would help reach goals and objectives (i.e., Castaneda)
- informal communication between principal and students on a daily basis increased student
- self esteem (i.e., Morningside)
- established a parent center (i.e., Resaca)
- weekly co-planning days (i.e., Sharp, Resaca)

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- power brunches held once a month at a local restaurant for grade level teachers. Teachers are able to relate in a different setting and become more creative with their plans for the grade level (i.e., Russell)
- weekly progress reports or school newsletters sent home to parents (i.e., Burns, Cromack, Morningside, Resaca)

Results of the 1997-98 Survey

Each year this writer evaluates the District Accountability Plan, which consists of several goals that are mainly focused on student achievement as assessed by the Texas Assessment of Academic Skills. The plan is closely aligned to the Texas Education Agency's Academic Excellence Indicator System, which provided the blueprint for developing the Campus Action Student Achievement Improvement Plans. The district's Accountability Plan is designed to be more stringent than the state plan as an attempt to safeguard that none of the district campuses are identified as "low performing." Other goals have to do with student attendance and the dropout rate, which are directly related to academic achievement and part of the State Accountability System. Analyzing the data to evaluate the District Accountability Plan and in order to develop a new one, a 4-year trend in school improvement was noted. This trend is illustrated in Table 5.

Table 5 lists the campuses that were initially identified as State Recognized in 1995-96, the campuses that followed suit in 1996-97, and those campuses that remained Recognized or fell off the list. A similar listing for 1997-98, and 1998-99 is also included. Specifically, the list includes an analysis over a four-year period. Seven elementary campuses were identified as State Recognized in 1995-96. Oliveira Middle School was added to study since it was the only secondary campus that came close to being Recognized. For the year 1996-97, Burns, Cromack, and Resaca Elementary campuses lost their Recognized status. The other four kept their Recognized status and three additional elementary campuses joined the select group. Oliveira Middle School, which had been identified as close to being Recognized the previous year, joined that select group as well. In 1997-98, six additional elementary campuses became State Recognized. Burns and Resaca **regained** their Recognized status from 1995-96, after losing it in 1996-97, and Castaneda and Morningside Elementary made it to the Exemplary status which is the highest at the state level. Stell Middle School joined Oliveira Middle School, and two high schools also achieved the Recognized Status. Analyzing the scores for 1998-99, it is noted that Burns, Martin, Palm Grove, and Perez Elementary campuses lost their previous Recognized rating. Castaneda, which was Exemplary the year before, slipped down to Recognized. Vela Middle School joined Oliveira and Stell Middle School in achieving the Recognized rating while the remaining three high schools joined the Recognized status of the other two high schools. Thus all five (5) district high schools are now State Recognized.

Only seven elementary campuses were identified as State Recognized in 1995-96. None of the secondary campuses made the Recognized list. In 1996-97, a total of eight campuses were Recognized, including one middle school. In 1997-98, a total of nineteen campuses made the select list. Two of the elementary campuses became Exemplary, two middle schools were Recognized, two of the high schools were also Recognized, and the rest of these nineteen campuses were Recognized. In 1998-99, a total of eighteen campuses made the Exemplary or Recognized list. Eight of the secondary campuses were State Recognized.

The Survey of Effective School Practices was replicated with the nineteen campuses that gained Recognized or Exemplary status during the 1997-98 school year. The results of the survey parallel those found in the previous section. Tables 6 through 9 provide an analysis of the responses from the specified sections of the survey from the campuses and can be compared to the responses found on Tables I through 4. The only category found in the 1997-98 survey that did not appear in the earlier survey was Career and Technology. Both high schools (i.e., Lopez and Pace) indicated that a high emphasis was placed on students in career and technology courses which, in turn, led to a greater number of students exhibiting high academic achievement. In revisiting the 1998-99 Campus Action Student Achievement Improvement Plan, it was found that the same characteristics found in Recognized or Exemplary campuses (commitment, focus, collaboration and creativity) are replicated in the latest analysis of what makes an effective school.

SUMMARY

What appears to set these schools apart are the commitment, creativity, persistence and professionalism with which they have gone about the task of instructional implementation. They have designed and implemented solutions to fit students' individualized needs. What is the lesson from all these experiences? No easy answer emerges. There is no quick fix or single solution; rather, it is the chemistry of all the little positive things that make the difference. Each recognized school tends to blend these themes in different ways. All the schools have high quality staffs who take instruction seriously. They hold high expectations for all students and staff. They can motivate staff and students to achieve their best. They have strong leadership. They create work environments where staff members grow and continue to perform at high levels. They creatively use people and resources, and they tackle problems with a common force of energy that unites the school.

In summary, the findings of this study support current research that indicates program, money, and curriculum alone will not make a difference unless these key characteristics are woven together to create successful learners. One of the fundamental elements of any successful organization is a collaborative culture that is dedicated to a commitment to continuous improvement.

Table 1. Instructional Environmental Factors that contributed to Student Achievement (1995-96)

Instructional Environmental Factors	Percentage Reporting Very Weak Contribution	Percentage Reporting Weak Contribution	Percentage Reporting Undecided	Percentage Reporting Strong Contribution	Percentage Reporting Very Strong Contribution
Teachers demonstrate a willingness to spend extra time with students.				25%	75%
Teachers care that students do their homework.				13%	87%
Students feel school is a safe place.				25%	75%
Class size enhanced the carrying out of effective instruction.				13%	87%
Students clearly understand the school's discipline management system.				25%	75%
All materials necessary for quality instruction are available.		12.5%	12.5%		75%
Staff closely and regularly monitors implementation of instructional program.				13%	87%
Uses every opportunity to recognize students and staff to build pride and commitment to school.				25%	75%
Teachers are perceived as fair.		12.5%		12.5%	75%
Interruptions are rare during instructional time. Teachers and administrators protect time on tasks.		12.5%		12.5%	75%
Teachers exhibit a lot of school spirit because they are proud of their school.				50%	50%

NOTE: All eight schools selected for this study responded to the survey.

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Table 2. Instructional Process Factors that Contributed to Student Achievement (1995-96)

Instructional Process Factors	Percentage Reporting Very Weak Contribution	Percentage Reporting Weak Contribution	Percentage Reporting Undecided	Percentage Reporting Strong Contribution	Percentage Reporting Very Strong Contributio
Teachers keep students regularly informed on their classroom progress.					100%
Teachers use innovative instructional strategies that reflect knowledge of teaching and learning theories.					100%
Speakers, presenters, mentors, tutors and community volunteers are used to enhance the classroom instruction.		12.5%	12.5%	25%	50%
Teachers explain content/learning tasks clearly.					100%
Teachers relate content to student interest/experience.				25%	75%
Reading instruction is incorporated into the content areas.					100%
Students receive at least 250 minutes of reading instruction per week.					100%
Students receive at least 250 minutes of math instruction per week.					100%
Teachers provide multiple independent activities after guided practice.				12%	88%
Teachers provide equitable opportunity for response among high and low achieving students.				12%	88%
Teachers provide praise for the learning performance.					100%
Teachers use higher level questioning strategies.				12%	88%
Teachers encourage independent reading.				12%	88%
Teachers provide for small and large group instruction.					100%
Teachers use cooperative learning strategies.			12%	25%	63%
Teachers use multi-sensory teaching techniques.				25%	75%
Teachers available for after/before school tutoring.	12%		12%	38%	38%
Teachers have a personal interest in students.				12%	88%
Teachers provide a reason for praise.				12%	88%
Students receive feedback about performance.					100%
Teachers interact with students verbally and/or nonverbally during instruction.				12%	88%
Teachers provide individual help during independent practice equitable among high and low achievers.				12%	88%

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Table 2 (continued). Instructional Process Factors that Contributed to Student Achievement

Instructional Process Factors	Percentage Reporting Very Weak Contribution	Percentage Reporting Weak Contribution	Percentage Reporting Undecided	Percentage Reporting Strong Contribution	Percentage Reporting Very Strong Contribution
Teachers use courtesy as they interact with students.					100%
Teachers provide wait time for students to respond to questions during instructions.					100%
Teachers maintain high standards for their classrooms.					100%
School has a strong mission that guides instructional strategies.				12%	88%
Teachers have high expectations for all students and provide assistance for all students to meet the expectations.					100%
Teachers apply school classroom rules consistently.					100%
Teachers have specific expectations for classroom behavior.					100%

NOTE: All eight schools selected for this study responded to the survey.

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Table 3. Administrative Factors that Contributed to Student Achievement (1995-96)

Administrative Factors	Percentage Reporting Very Weak Contribution	Percentage Reporting Weak Contribution	Percentage Reporting Undecided	Percentage Reporting Strong Contribution	Percentage Reporting Very Strong Contribution
Staff has the opportunities to be creative in how they carry out administrative activities.		12.5%		12.5%	75%
There is a clear and distinct statement of the administration's vision of the school.				12%	88%
Teachers and students are able to participate in decisions that affect their work.		12%		25%	63%
Principal uses Team teaching and/or Academic teaching to maximize learning.			25%	25%	50%
Principal monitors staffing patterns to improve instruction.				37%	63%
Principal provides for diversity of instruction: departmentalized vs. Subject area.	12%			25%	63%
Principal empowers teachers to be risk takers.				12%	88%
Principal checks for evidence the teaching strategies presented in staff development are being implemented.				25%	75%
Principal reviews and monitors SAIP during staff meetings and in the classroom.				12%	88%
There are intrinsic and extrinsic rewards from work.				25%	75%
The principal provides a clear strong instructional leadership.				25%	75%
The principal solicits input from staff.				25%	75%
The principal seeks to provide relevant and continuous staff development to improve instruction.				12%	88%
The principal makes many informal contacts with the teachers and students.				12%	88%
Teachers play a major role in the determination of the curriculum regarding subject area objectives and classes to be taught.				12%	88%

NOTE: All eight schools selected for this study responded to the survey.

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Table 4. Communication Factors that Contributed to Student Achievement (1995-96)

Administrative Factors	Percentage Reporting Very Weak Contribution	Percentage Reporting Weak Contribution	Percentage Reporting Undecided	Percentage Reporting Strong Contribution	Percentage Reporting Very Strong Contribution
Efforts are made to increase quality and quantity of parent/teacher communication.					100%
There are frequent formal and informal discussions concerning instruction and student achievement led by the principal.				25%	75%
The administration is easy to understand and has an open dialogue with staff members.				12%	88%
Teachers frequently inform students on how they do on schoolwork and tests.					100%
Teachers convey an understanding of what students can expect to learn.					100%
In faculty meetings, teachers cooperate with one another to come up with a common focus and strategies to accomplish goals and objectives.					100%
Teachers ask for advice from their colleagues regarding the most effective instructional strategies.				12%	88%
There is evidence of parental support for the school program.				25%	75%
There is a strong linkage with the community. Community members are involved in services, instruction, or school decision making.				25%	75%

NOTE: All eight schools selected for this study responded to the survey.

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Table 5: BROWNSVILLE INDEPENDENT SCHOOL DISTRICT
RECOGNIZED/EXEMPLARY STATUS OVER 4-YEARS

Campuses	1995-96	1996-97	1997-98	1998-99
Aiken Elementary			✓-R	
Burns Elementary	✓-R		✓-R	
Castaneda Elementary	✓-R	✓-R	✓-E	✓-R
Cromack Elementary	✓-R			
Del Castillo Elementary			✓-R	✓-R
Egly Elementary		✓-R	✓-R	✓-R
Martin Elementary			✓-R	
Morningside Elementary	✓-R	✓-R	✓-E	✓-E
Palm Grove Elementary		✓-R	✓-R	
Perez Elementary		✓-R	✓-R	
Putegnat Elementary			✓-R	✓-R
Resaca Elementary	✓-R		✓-R	✓-R
Russell Elementary	✓-R	✓-R	✓-R	✓-R
Sharp Elementary	✓-R	✓-R	✓-R	✓-R
Villa Nueva Elementary			✓-R	✓-E
Yturria Elementary			✓-R	✓-R
*Hudson Elementary				✓-R
Oliveira Middle School		✓-R	✓-R	✓-R
Stell Middle School			✓-R	✓-R
Vela Middle School				✓-R
Lopez High School			✓-R	✓-R
Pace High School			✓-R	✓-R
Hanna High School				✓-R
Porter High School				✓-R
Rivera High School				✓-R
✓-R = Recognized				
✓-E = Exemplary				

* New Campus (First year open)
Total Number of Campuses under Regular State Accountability in District: 42
28 Elementary Campuses
9 Middle Schools
5 High Schools

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Table 6. Instructional Environmental Factors that contributed to Student Achievement (1997-98)

Instructional Environmental Factors	Percentage Reporting Very Weak Contribution	Percentage Reporting Weak Contribution	Percentage Reporting Undecided	Percentage Reporting Strong Contribution	Percentage Reporting Very Strong Contribution
Teachers demonstrate a willingness to spend extra time with students.				5%	95%
Teachers care that students do their homework.				11%	89%
Students feel school is a safe place.				16%	84%
Class size enhanced the carrying out of effective instruction.	5%			42%	53%
Students clearly understand the school's discipline management system.			5%	11%	84%
All materials necessary for quality instruction are available.			5%	32%	63%
Staff closely and regularly monitors implementation of instructional program.				5%	95%
Uses every opportunity to recognize students and staff to build pride and commitment to school.				21%	79%
Teachers are perceived as fair.				42%	58%
Interruptions are rare during instructional time. Teachers and administrators protect time on tasks.			5%	16%	79%
Teachers exhibit a lot of school spirit because they are proud of their school.		5%		11%	84%

NOTE: All nineteen campuses that gained Recognized or Exemplary status during the 1997-98 school year responded to this survey.

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Table 7. Instructional Process Factors that Contributed to Student Achievement (1997-98)

Instructional Process Factors	Percentage Reporting Very Weak Contribution	Percentage Reporting Weak Contribution	Percentage Reporting Undecided	Percentage Reporting Strong Contribution	Percentage Reporting Very Strong Contribution
Teachers keep students regularly informed on their classroom progress.				21%	79%
Teachers use innovative instructional strategies that reflect knowledge of teaching and learning theories.			5%	11%	84%
Speakers, presenters, mentors, tutors and community volunteers are used to enhance the classroom instruction.			5%	53%	42%
Teachers explain content/learning tasks clearly.				16%	84%
Teachers relate content to student interest/experience.				26%	74%
Reading instruction is incorporated into the content areas.				16%	84%
Students receive at least 250 minutes of reading instruction per week.			5%	5%	90%
Students receive at least 250 minutes of math instruction per week.				16%	84%
Teachers provide multiple independent activities after guided practice.				26%	74%
Teachers provide equitable opportunity for response among high and low achieving students.			5%	26%	69%
Teachers provide praise for the learning performance.				16%	84%
Teachers use higher level questioning strategies.				32%	68%
Teachers encourage independent reading.				16%	84%
Teachers provide for small and large group instruction.				26%	74%
Teachers use cooperative learning strategies.			5%	37%	58%
Teachers use multi-sensory teaching techniques.			11%	21%	68%
Teachers available for after/before school tutoring.				32%	68%
Teachers have a personal interest in students.				5%	95%
Teachers provide a reason for praise.				16%	84%
Students receive feedback about performance.				10%	90%
Teachers interact with students verbally and/or nonverbally during instruction.				10%	90%
Teachers provide individual help during independent practice equitable among high and low achievers.				21%	79%

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Table 7 (continued). Instructional Process Factors that Contributed to Student Achievement (1997-98)

Instructional Process Factors	Percentage Reporting Very Weak Contribution	Percentage Reporting Weak Contribution	Percentage Reporting Undecided	Percentage Reporting Strong Contribution	Percentage Reporting Very Strong Contribution
Teachers use courtesy as they interact with students.				10%	90%
Teachers provide wait time for students to respond to questions during instructions.				16%	84%
Teachers maintain high standards for their classrooms.				10%	90%
School has a strong mission that guides instructional strategies.				5%	95%
Teachers have high expectations for all students and provide assistance for all students to meet the expectations.				21%	79%
Teachers apply school classroom rules consistently.				16%	84%
Teachers have specific expectations for classroom behavior.				5%	95%

NOTE: All nineteen campuses that gained Recognized or Exemplary status during the 1997-98 school year responded to this survey.

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Table 8. Administrative Factors that Contributed to Student Achievement (1997-98)

Administrative Factors	Percentage Reporting Very Weak Contribution	Percentage Reporting Weak Contribution	Percentage Reporting Undecided	Percentage Reporting Strong Contribution	Percentage Reporting Very Strong Contribution
Staff has the opportunities to be creative in how they carry out administrative activities.			10%	16%	74%
There is a clear and distinct statement of the administration's vision of the school.				5%	95%
Teachers and students are able to participate in decisions that affect their work.			11%	26%	63%
Principal uses Team teaching and/or Academic teaching to maximize learning.	5%		11%	21%	63%
Principal monitors staffing patterns to improve instruction.				16%	84%
Principal provides for diversity of instruction: departmentalized vs. Subject area.	5%	5%	16%	26%	48%
Principal empowers teachers to be risk takers.			10%		90%
Principal checks for evidence the teaching strategies presented in staff development are being implemented.			10%	10%	80%
Principal reviews and monitors SAIP during staff meetings and in the classroom.			10%	26%	64%
There are intrinsic and extrinsic rewards from work.			10%	21%	69%
The principal provides a clear strong instructional leadership.			5%	16%	79%
The principal solicits input from staff.				5%	95%
The principal seeks to provide relevant and continuous staff development to improve instruction.			5%	10%	85%
The principal makes many informal contacts with the teachers and students.				10%	90%
Teachers play a major role in the determination of the curriculum regarding subject area objectives and classes to be taught.				26%	74%

NOTE: All nineteen campuses that gained Recognized or Exemplary status during the 1997-98 school year responded to this survey.

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Table 9. Communication Factors that Contributed to Student Achievement (1997-98)

Administrative Factors	Percentage Reporting Very Weak Contribution	Percentage Reporting Weak Contribution	Percentage Reporting Undecided	Percentage Reporting Strong Contribution	Percentage Reporting Very Strong Contribution
Efforts are made to increase quality and quantity of parent/teacher communication.			5%	26%	69%
There are frequent formal and informal discussions concerning instruction and student achievement led by the principal.			5%	21%	74%
The administration is easy to understand and has an open dialogue with staff members.			5%	21%	74%
Teachers frequently inform students on how they do on schoolwork and tests.			5%	5%	90%
Teachers convey an understanding of what students can expect to learn.			5%		95%
In faculty meetings, teachers cooperate with one another to come up with a common focus and strategies to accomplish goals and objectives.			5%	32%	63%
Teachers ask for advice from their colleagues regarding the most effective instructional strategies.			5%	32%	63%
There is evidence of parental support for the school program.		5%	10%	16%	69%
There is a strong linkage with the community. Community members are involved in services, instruction, or school decision making.		5%	16%	37%	42%

NOTE: All nineteen campuses that gained Recognized or Exemplary status during the 1997-98 school year responded to this survey.

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REFERENCES

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APPENDIX

Survey of Effective School Practices

BROWNSVILLE INDEPENDENT SCHOOL DISTRICT

SURVEY

OF

EFFECTIVE SCHOOL

PRACTICES

Prepared by: Dr. Mona Hopkins
9/96 Area Administrator

Brownsville Independent School District

SURVEY OF EFFECTIVE SCHOOL PRACTICES

Campus Name: _____ Principal: _____

Other(s): _____

_____

_____

INTRODUCTION

Please respond to the following survey on instructional, programmatic, organizational and administrative practices at your campus. You are being asked to respond to this questionnaire because of your consistent gains in student achievement. The data gathered will be analyzed, compiled and published for distribution as Effective School Practices. Please give as much information as you think necessary. We believe that some very unique things are happening on your campus and we would like for you to share these practices with us. Thank you.

In each section there are relevant statements that have been found to correlate with effective schools. Please read each statement. Circle the number (1, 2, 3, 4, 5) by the statement that best describes how strongly you feel this factor contributed to your school's success in student achievement.

1	2	3	4	5
Weakly Contributed		Undecided		Strongly Contributed

It is impossible to accurately describe a successful program with a few multiple-choice questions. Therefore, at the end of each section you are asked to briefly describe what you feel contributed to higher student achievement. These factors may or may not be included in the multiple-choice items.

1. What program areas do you feel were responsible for higher student achievement on your campus last year? (Mark **ALL** that apply)

___ Bilingual	___ Special Ed	___ Gifted and Talented
___ Title 1	___ At-Risk	___ Career and Technology
___ Counseling	___ After School Program	___ Computer Assisted Instruction

2. What characteristics of the programs that you marked contributed to higher student achievement last year?

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

3. In your opinion why do you think these characteristics contributed to higher student achievement last year?

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

INSTRUCTIONAL ENVIRONMENT

Instructional Environment is concerned with how Staff perceives conditions or attitudes at school that directly affect student achievement. Please read each statement. Think about the factors that you believe contributed to students' higher achievement last year. Circle the number (1, 2, 3, 4, 5) by the statement that best describes how strongly you feel this factor contributed to your school's success in student achievement.

Circle the number (1, 2, 3, 4, 5)

	1 Weakly Contributed	2	3 Undecided	4	5 Strongly Contributed
1. Teachers demonstrate a willingness to spend extra time with students.	1	2	3	4	5
2. Teachers care that students do their homework.	1	2	3	4	5
3. Students feel school is a safe place to be.	1	2	3	4	5
4. Class size enhances the carrying out of effective instruction.	1	2	3	4	5
5. Students clearly understand the school's discipline management system.	1	2	3	4	5
6. All materials necessary for quality instruction are available.	1	2	3	4	5
7. Staff closely and regularly monitors implementation of instructional programs.	1	2	3	4	5
8. Campus uses every opportunity to recognize students and staff to build pride and commitment to the school.	1	2	3	4	5
9. Teachers exhibit a lot of school spirit because they are proud of their school.	1	2	3	4	5
10. Teachers and staff are perceived as fair.	1	2	3	4	5
11. Interruptions are rare during instructional time. Teachers and administrator protect time on task.	1	2	3	4	5

SUMMARY QUESTIONS

1. In your opinion what are the major strengths in your school's Instructional Environment that led to higher student achievement last year?

INSTRUCTIONAL PROCESS

Instructional Process is concerned with activities and planning by teachers that directly lead to higher student achievement. Please read each statement. Think about the factors that you believe contributed to students' higher achievement last year. Circle the number (1, 2, 3, 4, 5) by the statement that best describes how strongly you feel this factor contributed to your school's success in student achievement.

Circle the number (1, 2, 3, 4, 5)

	1 Weakly Contributed	2	3 Undecided	4	5 Strongly Contributed
12. Teachers keep students regularly informed about their classroom progress.	1	2	3	4	5
13. Teachers use innovative instructional strategies that reflect knowledge of teaching and learning theories.	1	2	3	4	5
14. Speakers, presenters, mentors, tutors, and community volunteers are used to enhance the classroom instruction.	1	2	3	4	5
15. Teachers explain content/learning tasks clearly.	1	2	3	4	5
16. Teachers relate content to student interest/ experience.	1	2	3	4	5
17. Reading instruction is incorporated into the content areas.	1	2	3	4	5
18. Students receive at least 250 minutes of reading instruction per week.	1	2	3	4	5
19. Students receive at least 250 minutes of math instruction per week.	1	2	3	4	5
20. Teachers provide multiple independent activities after guided practice.	1	2	3	4	5
21. Teachers provide equitable opportunity for response among high and low achieving students.	1	2	3	4	5

22. Teachers provide praise for the learning performance.	1	2	3	4	5
23. Teachers use higher level questioning strategies.	1	2	3	4	5
24. Teachers encourage independent reading.	1	2	3	4	5
25. Teachers provide for small and large group instruction.	1	2	3	4	5
26. Teachers use cooperative learning strategies.	1	2	3	4	5
27. Teachers use multi-sensory teaching techniques.	1	2	3	4	5
28. Teachers are available for tutoring before and after school.	1	2	3	4	5
29. Teachers have a personal interest in students.	1	2	3	4	5
30. Teachers provide reasons for praise.	1	2	3	4	5
31. Students receive feedback about their class performance.	1	2	3	4	5
32. Teachers interact with students verbally and/or nonverbally during instruction.	1	2	3	4	5
33. Teachers provide individual help during independent practice equitably among high and low achievers.	1	2	3	4	5
34. Teachers use courtesy as they interact with students.	1	2	3	4	5
35. Teachers provide wait time for students to respond to questions during instruction.	1	2	3	4	5
36. Teachers maintain high standards for their classroom.	1	2	3	4	5
37. School has a strong mission that guides instructional strategies.	1	2	3	4	5

38. Teachers have high expectations for all students and provide assistance for all students to meet the expectations.	1	2	3	4	5
39. Teachers apply school/classroom rules consistently.	1	2	3	4	5
40. Teachers have specific expectations for classroom behavior.	1	2	3	4	5

SUMMARY QUESTION

1. In your opinion which of the following instructional processes led to higher student achievement last year? Explain all that apply.

    a. Team teaching
    b. Thematic units
    c. Peer tutoring
    d. Cooperative learning
    e. Multi-sensory techniques
    f. Multi-cultural curriculum

The instructional processes in the question above are not all inclusive. Please explain any other process not listed that led to higher student achievement last year. (Additional pages may be added)

ADMINISTRATION

Administration Process identifies staff perceptions of administrative procedures and policies that indirectly or directly led to higher student achievement. Please read each statement. Think about Administrative factors that you believe contributed to students' higher achievement last year. Circle the number (1, 2, 3, 4, 5) by the statement that best describes how strongly you feel this factor contributed to your school's success in student achievement.

Circle the number (1, 2, 3, 4, 5)

	1 Weakly Contributed	2	3 Undecided	4	5 Strongly Contributed
41. Staff has the opportunities to be creative in how they carry out administrative activities.	1	2	3	4	5
42. There is a clear and distinct statement of of the administrator's vision for the school.	1	2	3	4	5
43. Teachers and students are able to participate in decisions that affect their work.	1	2	3	4	5
44. Principal uses Team teaching and/or Academic teaming to maximize learning.	1	2	3	4	5
45. Principal monitors staffing patterns to improve instruction.	1	2	3	4	5
46. Principal provides for diversity of instruction: departmentalized vs. subject area.	1	2	3	4	5
47. Principal empowers teachers to be risk-takers.	1	2	3	4	5
48. Principal checks for evidence that the teaching strategies presented in staff development are being implemented.	1	2	3	4	5
49. Principal reviews and monitors the Student Achievement Improvement Plan (SAIP) during staff meetings and in the classroom.	1	2	3	4	5
50. There are intrinsic and extrinsic rewards from work.	1	2	3	4	5

51. The principal provides a clear strong instructional leadership.	1	2	3	4	5
52. The principal solicits input from staff.	1	2	3	4	5
53. The principal seeks to provide relevant and continuous staff development to improve instruction.	1	2	3	4	5
54. The principal makes many informal contacts with teachers and students.	1	2	3	4	5
55. Teachers play a major role in the determination of the curriculum regarding subject area objectives and classes to be taught.	1	2	3	4	5

SUMMARY QUESTION

1. In your opinion what are the major strengths in your school's Administration that led to higher student achievement last year?

COMMUNICATION

Communication is focused on how staff, students, and parents interact and how these factors indirectly lead to higher student achievement. Please read each statement. Think about Communication factors that you believe contributed to students' higher achievement last year. Circle the number (1, 2, 3, 4, 5) by the statement that best describes how strongly you feel this factor contributed to your school's success in student achievement.

Circle the number (1, 2, 3, 4, 5)

	1 Weakly Contributed	2	3 Undecided	4	5 Strongly Contributed
56. Efforts are made to increase quality and quantity of teacher/parent communication.	1	2	3	4	5
57. There are frequent formal and informal discussions concerning instruction and student achievement led by the principal.	1	2	3	4	5
58. The administration is easy to understand and has an open dialogue with staff members.	1	2	3	4	5
59. Teachers frequently inform students on how they do on schoolwork and tests.	1	2	3	4	5
60. Teacher convey an understanding of what students are expected to learn.	1	2	3	4	5
61. In faculty meetings, teachers cooperate with one another to come up with a common focus and strategies to accomplish goals and objectives.	1	2	3	4	5
62. Teachers ask for advise from their colleagues regarding the most effective instructional strategies.	1	2	3	4	5
63. There is evidence of parental support for the school program.	1	2	3	4	5
64. There is strong linkage with community. Community members are involved in services, instruction, or school decision making.	1	2	3	4	5

SUMMARY QUESTION

1. In your opinion what are the major strengths in your school's Communication strategies that led to higher student achievement last year?